

“For God so loved....”

John 3: 14-21

**** The ‘Lifesaving Station’**

Background: What is the greatest need man has?

Jesus speaks of the “New Birth” in John 3:3

Nicodemus, a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews, a religious man, came to Jesus saying in John 3:2: “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one else can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” What did Jesus respond?

“Most assuredly” he said, “unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Unless you are born from above, by the work of the Holy Spirit, you will never see eternal life. It’s not only life in heaven when you die, but a fulfilled life here on earth.

A 1994 Barna Research study found that many in the church had little or no idea of the basic principles and concepts of the Christian faith.

57% of born-again Christians couldn’t define the term, 50% couldn’t explain the John 3:16 passage, and nearly 3/4 had no idea what the Great Commission was.

So basic passages, like the John 3:16 passage, need to be reviewed regularly to help the church understand what great love God’s Son, Jesus Christ, has for each and every person in the world.

a. The core of the gospel .. the Good News .. is found in (verses 14 and 15). Christ paid for our sin debt, so that we may have eternal life. The abundant life He wants for us now, and the everlasting life in His presence that He’s promised to all who personally receive Him as their Savior and Lord.

In verse 14, we read that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness for a sinful, disobedient people, Jesus was lifted up on the Cross for the sins of the world.

A commentator puts it this way:

“The venom of the fiery serpents, shooting through the veins of the rebellious Israelites, was spreading death through the camp -- a lively emblem of the perishing condition of men by reason of sin. In both cases the remedy was divinely provided. In both the way of cure strikingly resembled that of the disease. Stung by serpents, by a serpent they are healed. So, in redemption, as by man (Adam) came death, by Man also (Jesus), comes life.”

In both cases the remedy is conspicuously displayed. The brass serpent on the pole in Moses day, Jesus on the Cross two thousand years ago.

Just as looking upon the serpent in the wilderness was the only means of healing for Israel, so personally accepting the finished work of Christ on the Cross is the only means of a new birth for man.

We need only look upon that Cross and appropriate the regenerating power of God by faith in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus for us, in our place.

Again, eternal life not only means length of life, but quality of life. We experience it before we reach heaven. Romans 8:32, “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?”

The religious, who don’t know Christ, are often frustrated and angry, because they’re not experiencing real life, but they still resist faith in absolutes like the Word of God, or the need for personal repentance.

But God loves them, and He wants them to repent!

**b. _____ (verse:16) speaks of God’s selection of us --
we’ll be keying in on that this morning.**

c. _____ (verse 17) “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

This speaks of the object of Christ’s mission to earth. Not to condemn, but to save. The purpose of the church is life-saving, not people-condemning. This involves sharing the truth found only in the Bible, God Word. To those who are perishing, as Paul said, the Cross, the simple way of salvation, the truth found in God’s Word, is foolishness. But God still loves those we are commanded to reach for Christ, and He wants them to repent.

d. _____ (verse:18) speaks of the sentence against us. The one who does not believe has already been condemned and judged. Is this because God is unfair? No. Because our sins have already separated us from God. Our sins have judged us. God hasn’t judged us, our sins have.

As Oswald Chambers has put it, “ God nowhere holds a man responsible for having the heredity of sin, but if when I realize Jesus Christ came to deliver me from it, I refuse to let Him do so, from that moment I begin to get the seal of damnation.”

Christ death for us and our personal acceptance of Him frees us from this judgment. ‘Believe’ means trust and commitment in Christ as Savior and Lord which results in a new nature, a change of heart, and obedience to the Lord.

e. _____ (verses 19-21) speak of our separation from Him

Light has come in the world but people loved the darkness (their own brand of religion.) This is the critical moment, as Oswald Chambers has put it. This is where men choose to remain in sin. They would not come to the light because the real truth about themselves would be revealed.

God sees everything about you, friend, and He loves you in spite of it! Verses 20 and 21 should encourage you to come to the light, with the

full baggage of your sin. Perhaps folks are so weighed down today with insecurity, guilt, anger, confusion, backbiting, purposelessness .. because they're still under the judgment of their own sin. Why not let Christ lift that burden for you!

God loves you! Three proofs of God's love are found in the 'selections' that are mentioned in John 3:16 .

- (A) We've been selected that we may know His love
- (B) We've been selected that we may not perish
- (C) We've been selected that we may have 'eternal life'

A. (A) We've been selected that we may know His love

Firstly, we've been selected that we may know His love. "God so loved" the world. The word "so" reveals the intensity of God's love for you and I. He 'so loved' you that He was willing to sacrifice His one and only Son, Jesus to a painful death, so that you might avoid sin's penalty that you and I so justly deserve.

Christ's love is shown in His sacrifice for us, freeing us from the guilt of our sin. Are you under a burden of guilt? Jesus, God's only Son, has paid it all, and Romans 8:1 says that if you come to know Him personally, there will be no condemnation.

Paul says in 2 Cor. 5:21 that He (God) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin, to become sin on our behalf, so that we might have the righteousness of God.

In Hosea 14:4 we read: "I will love them with a willing love for my anger has turned from them." God does love you. But unless you've received Him personally in your life .. unless you've been born again (born from above), you've never accepted this love and forgiveness and you are still in your sins.

That's why some don't want to hear about sin, because the Holy Spirit

is convicting their hearts. Don't run from the remedy, embrace it. Open your heart to the love God has for you. Receive Him personally into your life.

By way of application:

The natural response to God's love is to love others. To do less would be ingratitude. But, if you don't know Christ, you can't love with God's love. To the skeptic who says they can't believe the Bible to be literally true, a key test to show that you need to be born again is the measure of your love for one another.

Illustration:

In a boiler room, it's impossible to look into a boiler to see how much water it contains. But running up beside it is a tiny tube, that serves as a gauge. As the water stands in the tube, so it stands in the boiler. How do you know you love God? You believe you love Him, but you want to know. Look at the gauge. Your love for your brother is the measure of your love for God. Do you have an issue against someone else? Could it be your issue is against God? *Could it be you've never been born again?*

God loves you, and He wants you to repent!

We've been selected that we may know God's love... secondly,

B. We've been selected that we may not perish

1. that we may not 'perish' (what does that mean?)

That we may not live eternally separated from God. Someone has said that we are born so corrupt and depraved that there is in us, as it were, an inborn hatred of God so that we desire nothing but what is displeasing to Him, and every affection of our flesh wages continual war against His righteousness.

That is the reason teens kill one another, why two students at Columbine High School can create such devastation, why people trash their newborn babies, why 1 of 4 teen girls are sexually abused by age

19, and on and on. Apart from a personal relationship with Christ, except by God's Grace, any one of us could commit those same sins.

We've been selected that we may not perish ...

- 2. even though we have already been 'judged'**
Again, see verse 18 "already judged". Why?

Because until the time we personally commit our lives to Christ as Lord and Savior, we are separated from God because of our sin. No amount of church work, prestige, money we give, or belief system we possess, can save us. For many, those things only separate them more from Christ.

'Light', verse 19, 'came into the world, but the world (men and women) loved darkness instead.' They seemed content with making up their own religion, following their own course in life, and so it is today.

God isn't interested in John or Sally's interpretation of Christianity, He's interested in you opening your heart to His Son Jesus. Admitting what each of us knows deep in our hearts .. that we're sinners, separated from Him. Many come to God "their way", but Jesus said there's only One Way .. through faith in and obedience to His Son.

A few years ago, in downtown Los Angeles, during some bitter rioting, Rodney King asked, "Why can't we all just get along?" The reason is that we are born sinners.

Alienated from God, and without a born-again experience, we can only tolerate others, but not truly love them.

And the issue is not people, it's God. remember what Jesus said in John 7:7: "The world cannot hate you; but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil."

Those who actively oppose Gods people really have issues with God. But God loves them too, and He wants them to repent and come to know Him personally!

We've been selected that we may know God's love... We've been selected that we may not perish, and lastly,

C. We've been selected that we may have 'eternal life'

1. verse 17: "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. Saved from what? Saved or spared from being separated eternally from Him yes, but far more. So that you and I can have the life intended for us by God, long before we were born.

John 10:10 "I have come that they might have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" Fuller. Richer. More satisfying. Is your life like that? Or, do you harbor anger or resentment towards another person? Do you put down another in order to feel good about yourself? Our lives are short, but they can be meaningful, and rich, and abundant, and fun. You can have peace, and purpose..but you need to reach out to Jesus and ask Him for it. The first step? Be born again.

For those of you who personally know Christ, these two facts:

--the reality of judgment to come and
--the reality of a rich, abundant life that God has for us now -- should encourage us to reach out with this "Good News" to our family, our friends, our neighbors. Some will question why we're so 'fanatical'?

By way of illustration:

If you had been cured of a deadly disease by taking a certain medicine, and only that one medicine could cure that type of disease, wouldn't you want to share it with others.? And those others, suffering as you once did, would they not be grateful, or would they refuse the medicine, because they wanted to be cured "their own way"?

Or because they deluded themselves into thinking that they didn't have the disease? Sin is the disease. Christ alone is the cure. The Word alone reveals the truth about God.

Conclusion: (verse 21: "But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.")

Illustration: The Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-8)
He was, according to the Apostle Luke, ‘breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord’. He persecuted the believers. he jailed both men and women. He thought he was doing this for God.
But along the road to Damascus, where he hoped to capture more believers and bring them bound, back to Jerusalem, “..suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him,

“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”
And he said, “ Who art Thou, Lord?”
And He said, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting..”

Personal commitment:

Have you been fighting against God? God loves you, and He wants you to repent. Why not today?